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editorial

"LAM SON 719" Operation: THE WHITE HOUSE Facing A Puzzle

(Text on page 3)

Highway 9 was the testing ground of US most advanced tactics in military art : "Copters' mobility," "armoured units combined with air forces".

Tanks and choppers destroyed or captured on Highway 9 theatre prove in no way the efficiency of the US strategic formula : "puppet infantry plus US support."

NEW TIGER CAGES BEING BUILT

SAIGON (Feb. 9)

CONSTRUCTION of three new blocks of isolation cells is scheduled to begin this month on the penal island of Con Son by an American firm. Each of the three blocks will contain 96 cells. The new construction will allow Con Son officials to drastically increase the number of prisoners held under "tiger cage" conditions, one American who is familiar with the project claims.

The new "tiger cages" will be built by the firm of Raymond, Morrison, Knudsen, Brown, Root and Jones (RMK-BRJ) under a 400,000-dollar contract. The funds will be provided by MACCORDS (Military Assistance Command Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support), the American paramilitary economic aid program here.

The isolation compound will be a "Top Ten Project," one person familiar with RMK-BRJ priorities said. As such, it will receive priority in the routing of supplies and assignment of personnel.

The Vietnamese authorities already have one cell block under construction. A January 7 memo describing the job to be done at Con Son states that the new construction is to be "similar to the isolation cell block currently under construction as a self-help project."

Prison labor will be used in the construction. Skilled prison labor will be paid 200 piasters (72 cents) per week and unskilled labor will receive 150 piasters (55 cents) a week. There is some concern that the prisoners will not be in good enough physical condition to do a "full day's work." Discussion is under way about the possibility of providing special extra rations for those who work on the project.

Con Son prison was in the news last July when two American congressmen found the "tiger cages" which had been kept secret for years by the Vietnamese government. The "tiger cages" visited by Congressmen William Anderson and Augustus Hawkins were built by prison labor in 1939 under the direction of the French.

Congressman Anderson wrote to President Nixon following that visit: "The Tiger Cage imprisonment of human beings and the savage mistreatment of these prisoners are outrageous contradictions to the minimal standards of political decency we, as a free American people, should establish as a condition of our aid and friendship to any nation."

The January 7 memo, which describes what the RMK BRJ firm will build, states: "The scope of work is the completion of three cell blocks, each partitioned into 96 isolation cells, an outer compound wall of concrete block; a barbed wire perimeter fence with security gates; kitchen and dispensary."

The Porte-Kamp air-conditioned trailers were sent by barge to Con Son on February 6 to provide living quarters for nine Americans, one French employee, eight Vietnamese specialists and cooks and helpers. Mr. Ray Simmons has been named Project Superintendent.

A concerted effort has been made by both RMK-BRJ and the US government to keep the project a secret.

"Anyone who even takes a camera to Con Son will be terminated immediately," the RMK-BRJ project manager is reported to have said.

The persons who provided the information for this article have requested that their names not be used. However, copies of five different memos on "Project S623/70 Isolation Compound, Con Son" are in the possession of this writer.

RMK-BRJ began work in Viet Nam in 1962. Its projects have included construction of roads, airports, military compounds for the South Vietnamese government, radar sites, etc. "It is," said one of its employees, "the largest construction consortium in the world." It is best known in Viet Nam for the construction at Cam Ranh Bay. RMK-BRJ headquarters are in San Bruno, California.

The July publicity surrounding the "tiger cages" led to the formation of a special committee for the improvement of South Vietnamese prisons. The most important success of this committee's work and the Vietnamese press campaign against prison brutality is that all 300 women who were held in the "tiger cages" at Con Son have been returned to the mainland.

However, the present condition of the male prisoners on the island is not known. Several journalists have been refused visits. Former US Congressman Allard Lowenstein's request to go to Con Son was turned down by the Vietnamese Ministry of Interior.

The one Congressman, Philip Crane, who was allowed to go to the island shortly after the Anderson Hawkins trip claims to have found the Tiger Cages "cleaner than the average Vietnamese home."

In October, Vietnam's largest daily newspaper, *Tin Sang* (Morning News) reported a riot involving 300 prisoners demanding better living conditions. As a result of this uprising, *Tin Sang* wrote, 6,000 prisoners were put into a maximum security area "no different from the Tiger Cages."

DON LUCE

NIXON'S SHOP-WORN PEACE SWINDLE

In a nation-wide radio and television broadcast on April 7 last, President Nixon once again tried to calm down the ebullient tide of protest in the United States and the world, following his recent aggression against Laos that wound up in a disaster. Once again, he professed himself a peace champion and boasted of the imaginary success of his "Vietnamization" plan.

But everybody knows that the essence of Nixon's "Vietnamization" is the prolongation and intensification of the war in another form, the "change of the corpses' colours on the battlefield." It is no secret to anybody that Saigon casualties were the heaviest in Nixon's recent military adventure in Laos. Nixon himself had to admit in his address that the "the South Vietnamese (Saigon puppet troops. Ed.) suffered heavy casualties." Radio Japan on April 7 noted that "Nixon's speech has nothing new," adding that "Nixon still refused to announce a fixed date for the total withdrawal of US troops from Viet Nam."

Nixon's address is once again further evidence of his obduracy in carrying on the US war of aggression in South Viet Nam and spreading it to the whole of Indochina. American boys continue to die unnecessarily and the burden of the war keeps weighing heavily upon the people in the United States.

Though having announced the continued pullout of GIs of South Viet Nam, Nixon still turns a deaf ear to the RSVN PRG's logical and reasonable proposals, that is: immediate and total withdrawal from South Viet Nam of US and satellite troops, and respect for the South Viet Nam people's right to settle their internal affairs themselves without foreign interference.

No deceitful speech, no harsh crack-down can curb the anti-war powerful drive in the United States which keeps mounting and gaining momentum, pressing the Nixon administration "to bring the boys home now!"

For their part, the South Viet Nam people and their blood-sealed compatriots in the North, together with the other Indochinese peoples in the flush of their recent victories, will continue unflinchingly their struggle till final victory.

NEW US-PUPPET CRIMES

IN their Operation "Lam Son 719" the US-puppets mustered 45,000 troops selected among the cruellest ones, for new crimes against Vietnamese and Lao on the Highway 9 area. Making the most of their airforce, they threw into the operation 2,300 aircraft, including 800 helicopters. Western news agencies reported that, for troop transports and bombing raids, US helicopters flew an average 1,100 sorties per day, at times 2,400 sorties, bombers 500 sorties and B.52s 30-40 sorties. 900 tons of bombs were dropped by those aircraft daily on villages along Highway 9, causing innumerable losses to the peoples of Lacs and Viet Nam.

As Operation "Lam Son 719" was in full swing, large-scale looting raids were carried out by the US-puppets in South Viet Nam to supply their invasion of Laos with the population's manpower and property.

In Long An province on Feb. 21, 1971, in Binh Chanh village alone, they herded into concentration camps over 200 people, forcibly enrolled 20 men from 15 to 45 years of age into the puppet army, brought away over 300 oxen and buffaloes, 3,600 kilos of paddy and over 1 million piasters, burnt 120 dwelling houses and shot ead 16 people.

In two days — Feb. 10 and 11, 1971, — at Thanh Ha, Ben Luc, An Hoa, Duc Hoa (Nam Bo) in a "mopping-up" operation, they shot 27 people (among them 5 children of 7 years of age), forcibly recruited 30 young men into the puppet army, raped to death 5 women (among them 2 girls of 13) and took away all the people's property.

On Feb. 20, 1971, a press-ganging raid was mounted by the puppets at Long An village (Can Giuoc district): hundreds of people were concentrated into camps and all civilian property plundered.

At Duc Hoa, Duc Hoa Thuong, Hoa Khanh, Loc Giang, US "advisers" took direct command of a "sweep" by puppet troops in the course of which 80 people, including old agers above 50 and 15-year-old lads, were pressganged into the puppet army or "people's defence corps" to replace puppet troops committed to Operation "Lam Son 719."

In Tra Vinh province, in the last days of March, a main-force regiment of puppet Division 7 carried out a "sweep" against a number of villages in Cau Ke and Can Long districts: they set afire 200 dwelling houses, looted 14.4 tons of paddy, put 10 women to flogging then gang-raped them to death. 30 young men were forcefully sent to the Southern Laos front.

In Ca Mau province, in two days, March 25 and 27, 1971, another "sweep" was undertaken by Regiment 31 of puppet Division 21 against Bien Bac and Tri Phai villages, killing 20 peasants working in their fields, burning 100 houses, taking 36.5 tons of paddy, 700,000 piastres, 150 oxen and buffaloes, forcibly drafting 50 young men into the puppet army and sending 160 people to concentration camps.

At Ly Nhon district capital (Darlac province), in only 3 days — March 16, 17 and 18, 1971 — B.52s and other armed aircraft were continuously in action while "sweeps" were conducted resulting in 50 people impressed and 150 sent to concentration camps. In Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh provinces alone (Trung Bo), as the US-puppets were going on with their invasion of Laos no day passed without a crime being committed by their soldiery: over 1,200 people were driven into concentration camps, 2,676 head of cattle, 15 tons of paddy, over 100 million piasters were looted, 1,200 houses burnt, 35 women, including 10 girls from 13 to 15, raped to death, 120 people shot on the spot and 50 seriously wounded.

The above-mentioned facts again show that Nixon's "Vietnamization" simply means prolongation of an atrocious war of aggression and accumulation of fresh crimes against the peoples of South Viet Nam and other Indochinese countries.

editorial

"LAM SON 719" OPERATION: *The White House facing a puzzle*

THE whirrings of American whirly-birds with the last clusters of Saigon mercenaries clinging to their landing skids have long died away. Yet, Washington and Saigon top psychowar peddlars keep making a regular ballyhoo, clamouring that "Lam Son 719 did not yet wind up," that "it is too soon to speak of success or failure," and that "there will be a new plan in a few days" and other "Lam Sons would be conducted if needed."

But big lies and braggadocios cannot conceal the "Lam Son" operation ending in a flop. US-paid soldiers' bodies hurriedly buried and the graveyard of choppers and tanks on the hills all along Highway 9 speak enough by themselves. Fact is fact. A Vietnamese saying runs. "A hand cannot hide the sun." Senator Edward M. Kennedy also noted: "The (Lam Son) operation was conceived under a senseless news embargo that fooled no one but ourselves."

IN fact, we do think that even in the United States, no Americans have been deceived and public opinion there remarks that "Lam Son operation was a nightmare, a humiliating flight." For its part, the Saigon press pointedly asserted: "A fire cannot be quenched by kindling another one..." though that military adventure had been noisily publicized by US brass-hats as a move towards peace, an operation designed to "ending the war quickly" and "ensuring the total pullout of GIs" of Indochina. Moreover, US aggression over Laos could be seen in the overt stated aims of the operation: cutting off enemy supply routes, occupying Tchepone — "a strategic position" and "an important logistic storage of the enemy. It was part of the US scheme of testing practically on the battlefield the capability of the Saigon army painstakingly built and strengthened by the US Command to replace eventually the GIs in carrying on the war all over Indochina, perpetuating the occupation of that peninsula and making it a US military base and neo-colony.

In the first place, "Lam Son 719" conducted in Laos was a military move to salvage the US wrecked "Vietnamization" of the war. The American generals and their Saigon servants nurtured the hope of warding off the thunderous strikes of the South Viet Nam PLAF and the Cambodian NLAF, as the dry season was drawing near. On the other hand, the success of that campaign would help them get some gains on the other theatres, reverse the situation and realize all their ambitious dreams. As known to everybody, the operation was wiped out. But indelible are the stigmas on Nixon's face. How can he deny that he has deliberately and obstinately escalated and widened the war to the whole of Indochina? The roarings of cannons and guns of "Lam Son 719" have just ceased, but all over the world, the United States included, tides of protest keep mounting against that dangerous game.

"LAM SON 719" is the "test of the Vietnamization policy by bombs and shells," Washington and Saigon military boasted. The operation was to "show off the capability of the Saigon autonomous army" and give the "proof of the Vietnamization's success." Nixon emphatically termed his adventure the "key-point of success or failure," the "real turning point in the war." It is understandable that he played trumps in this "military game," flinging all US-puppet potential in this "decisive battle." It can be said safely that the operation drew in the flower of the US and Saigon armed forces, namely: the "most disciplined and tightly organized" paras, the "hard-core" Rangers, notorious for their cruelties, the Marines, that "elite of the most seasoned Saigon units."

Moreover, as Newsweek *remarked on Feb. 22, "Lam Son 719" was allowed the green light under the best conditions: on the field it benefitted massive support from US logistics, air forces and artillery, and in the rear from US combat troops."*

The "height" of the "Vietnamization" military strength was visibly materialized in that operation. 20,000 Saigon crack troops operated on a 20-km-wide and 25-km-long terrain. Behind them, was a 10,000 GI-strong shield, not to mention the presence of 320,000 US troops in South Viet Nam. The effectiveness of all types of aircraft was used at the maximum by Nixon: 2,300 planes, including 800 choppers, took part in the fighting and B.52s released 900 tons of bombs each day.

Tactical methods — the "gist" of US most up-to-date military knowledge and science — such as: helicopters mobility, armoured cars combined with air power, hilltop dug-ins, complex of base-camps, leap-frog, have been put to the test.

BUT things turned out not in the way American generals had expected. Once again they took a staggering blow. The "élite" of their strategic mobile forces was smashed to smithereens. The "most disciplined" paras badly battered, tried to take to flight but could not escape. As for the "hard-core" Rangers, they were also crushed, and the "most seasoned" Marines, in their panic rout, clang helter-shelter to the choppers' skids. Assuredly, the toll of 14,000 men annihilated and 1,000 others taken prisoner, including a number of field officers, is in no way an "indication of success" in the attempt to substitute the GIs on the battlefield with the puppet infantry.

Though considerable, the US backing of that operation lost all its effect. One must admit that the accuracy of the PLAF's flak and marksmen knocked the US aircraft out of the skies like dead leaves. The field was littered pell-mell with the carcasses of enemy tanks and armoured cars. The players of the imaginative "leap-frog" surprise-game were taken unawares anywhere they leaped in. The "enclaves on hilltop" trick resulted in the complete razing of hilltops, and the "underground fortifications" system got blasted in the air. Such "complex of base-camps with solid fortifications" as Ban Dong could neither resist the spearheads of the PLAF attackers covered by tanks and artillery.

Ban Dong has come down in the US list as the typical defeat of a bitterly frustrated drive. Ban Dong has buried thousands of puppet troops and hundreds of tanks and aircraft (gloomy illustration of the strategic formula: puppet troops plus US support), and together with them Nixon and Kissinger's military genius. It can be said that Ban Dong was a synthetic defeat. To all the unknowns of Nixon's much cherished "Vietnamization," Ban Dong is a prepared answer.

In fact, he has tried hard to "Vietnamize" the war, shore up the Saigon army in view of its gradual replacement of withdrawn GIs. But the point is how could the Saigon mercenaries manage by themselves if US military potential would pull out progressively? The answer can be found in the pitiable failure of the "Lam Son 719" operation, in spite of its generous "Americanization." The Sunday Times *also remarked that "the Saigon army's debacle in Laos, notwithstanding US most effective assistance, is evidence of its total incapability."*

The "Vietnamization" of the war is obviously the pivot of Nixon doctrine — a doctrine preaching the aggression on the Indochinese countries by the Indochinese forces themselves. Nixon's failure in using Saigon mercenaries to invade Cambodia then Laos is an indication of his doctrine having gone bankrupt basically. To the Saigon administration that serious setback opens no reassuring prospects at all while "disappointing" the US and its Asian "allies."

Curtain lowered on US military adventure in Laos. Hands-raised Saigon "crack" troops. Is this Nixon's "Vietnamization" success or failure?

THE repercussion of the lightning blow on Highway 9 is being acutely felt by the Saigon weakening regime which will become weaker and is torn away by mounting dissent. In the United States, the Nixon administration is facing a tragic situation and serious isolation. For the US aggressors and their henchmen, the disaster in store cannot be foreseen. Nixon has shown himself a diehard warmonger and gets more than one trick up his sleeve. However, after over two years of "Vietnamization," and following the tragedy of "Lam Son 719" on Highway 9 in Laos, the "Toan Thang 1-71" operation in Cambodia together with other reverses all over Indochina's battlefields, the US President is facing a puzzle:

— Where the events in Indochina will drive at, as the US has to keep pulling out its troops?

— Is there any other "talisman" able to ensure the Saigon army's "autonomous" activities after its rout, in spite of high "Americanization?"

— US basic tactics having been foiled and "Vietnamization proved itself to be sheer illusion," how will Nixon manage to avoid Johnson's plight?

The right answer was found, but Nixon's overheated head has overlooked it.

SOUTH VIET NAM in Struggle

During more than 60 days:

ON THE KHE SANH FRONT

★ **Nearly 7,000 enemy troops among them 4,054 GIs put out of action**

★ **863 military vehicles**

★ **234 aircraft shot down or destroyed**

ACCORDING to the PLAF Khe Sanh front Command's communiqué issued on April 7, 1971, during more than 60 days of continuous attacks from January 30 to March 31, the people and armed forces on the Khe Sanh front wiped out an important part of the live force and large quantities of war means of the enemy.

They *put out of action* **nearly 7,000 enemy** among them **4,054 GIs;**

Destroyed **863 military vehicles** among them **236 tanks** or **armoured cars;**

Shot down or destroyed on the ground **234 aircraft;**

Wrecked **72 cannons or big mortars;**

Sank or shot afire **42 warships** *or* **combat launches;**

Destroyed **41 big logistic storages** or **material dumps,** *set fire to millions of litres of gasoline and thousands of tons of weapons, ammunition, food, and military equipment.*

The communiqué went on: "Right at the start of the enemy's deployment and throughout his aggressive operation, the people and armed forces in Khe Sanh attacked completely on their own terms from Cua Viet to Dong Ha and Khe Sanh and Lao Bao, giving him many stunning, crippling blows.

Hardly had the enemy set foot on Highway 9 that the South Viet Nam armed forces and people attacked his operational bases and communication lines, smashing preparations for their invasion of Southern Laos, causing difficulties and casualties to the enemy right at the start of the operation.

When all of the enemy prongs were intercepted and besieged and compelled to dig in in Southern Laos, the PLAF wiped out the Saigon puppet 39th Ranger Battalion on Peak 500, 4km north of Lang Sen, contributing to the smashing of the enemy's northern prong.

The main forces, regional troop and guerillas, clinging to the enemy around the clock, stepped up their attacks on the enemy HQ, artillery grounds, logistic bases, car parking grounds, and airfields in Ai Tu and Dong Ha bases. At the same time, they sapped the enemy supply lines by cutting roads, blocking and intercepting air transport, driving the enemy into a critical situation

When the enemy were withdrawing from Southern Laos, the PLAF increased their attacks on the US troops coming to rescue the battered troops from Southern Laos on Highway 9 portion from Lao Bao to Lang Vay. They poured heavy fire on the enemy headquarters and bases at Ta Con, Khe Sanh, Ta Puc and Lao Bao, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy.

Simultaneously with the armed struggles, the local population rose up vigorously, destroying the enemy coercive forces and US-puppet's "pacification" program to seize control, agitating the enemy troops to change side and promoting the people's war in all fields.

In this hard struggle, in spite of the mobilization of 15,000 American troops and a big air power including B.52 strategic bombers, jet fighter-bombers of various types, many helicopters and a huge number of tanks and artillery pieces to support, coordinate or back up the puppet forces, the US could not help the latter in the invasion of Laos, and the GIs themselves received deadly blows from the PLAF. More than 4,000 American troops, together with a large quantity of military equipment, were buried in this historic Khe Sanh valley.

South Viet Nam PLAF gunners slamming fire into Khe Sanh position

TA CON AIRFIELD UNDER FIRE

FROM an observation tower one could hardly recognize the Ta Con airfield, a US-puppet medium-sized airfield, because of its thick shroud of smoke. Last night, Unit 91 penetrated and played havoc there, completely destroying more than 40 choppers, taking a toll of nearly 100 men, mostly pilots, technicians and radio specialists, blowing up 4 undergrounds, 7 depots and tens of barracks, setting afire 17 military vehicles including 6 tanks and armoured cars.

The commander of Unit 91 showed me the whole battlefield. "In 1968," he said, "the Yanks were kicked out of this Khe Sanh enclave, and the airfield had been left unused ever since. When our unit moved up here, we were confronted with tremendous difficulties in getting into the airfield as it was wholly covered with wild grass and thorny bushes. Nowhere had I seen such a luxuriant vegetation as here. It plaited even on the barbed wire fence now left to rust, and it was very difficult to pass through it."

"We must confess," the unit leader went on smilingly, "that when we were transferred here, our minds were not at ease. Some of our comrades wondered whether they were coming to Ta Con just to fight against tigers and the ghosts of US Marines. Of course we had to make intensive preparations for an eventual attack against Ta Con. The preparations had hardly been finished when enemy troops were sent in *en masse*. Our unit was beside itself with joy since it now had an opponent to fight against. At the same time it could not help its admiring the foresight of our superiors."

"A week later," the unit leader continued, "this decaying airfield was repaired by the enemy. They removed the old runway and replaced it by a new, wider and longer one, which could be used even by C.130 planes. Our unit was hectically busy those days. Our hideouts were often threatened by US armoured infantry incursions. We were very eager to deliver battle but the higher echelons advised us to bide our time. As the news of battles won in South Laos and on Highway 9 by friendly units reached us we were all happy but also impatient for action. Many comrades asked me, 'Why have we to wait?' I could only repeat to them what the higher authorities had told: 'Wait for a better opportunity.' As the enemy were sustaining heavy reverses in South Laos, each day their helicopters made 40 or 50 landings on Ta Con airfield to unload puppet soldiers' corpses and load supplies to Laos.

"The airfield was littered with debris of enemy planes, tanks and their soldiers' corpses from South Laos. To guard it the enemy mustered 3 battalions of US armoured infantry to be stationed around the place. That could not prevent our artillery from pounding the airfield for one week running, and as a result 12 choppers were destroyed by fire.

"What we were waiting for came at long last: our unit received orders to attack the airfield, all of us were transported with joy.

"It was a dark night and the sky was as low as a lid on the Khe Sanh enclave. There was moonlight and we proceeded enthusiastically along the slope of a hill, by the throbbing light of glow-worms.

"Ta Con was illuminated with electric lights and flares. The enemy artillery stationed all around now and then barked as if out of fright. Familiar with the enemy routine, our unit continued their advance. I murmured an order into the ears of Camrade H., commander of Group 1: 'The helicopter parking ground is on the left at 300 metres from the entrance, you have to lead your men over there and wait for instruction.' H. nodded and with his hand waved his men forward. They followed one another forming a sharp spearhead directed at the helicopter parking ground. The sky was ablaze with a parachute flare: a chopper suddenly whirred down. The enemy soldiers in the airfield called to each other to unload the corpses of their unfortunate mates. Taking advantage of this opportunity I gave a signal to the various groups of our unit to get closer to our target. At 003 hours on March 24, the whole unit was there."

"As the big-bellied choppers were already sitting before me on the tarmac," the unit leader eagerly went on, "I gave order to open fire. All our artillery pieces immediately went into action and rained a hail of shells on the central sector. Attacking columns sprang up from all directions. From now on, I was unable to discern various explosions as everything was a confused hell of a din. The greatest explosions came from the petrol drums on the southern fringe of the airfield. The fire—a sea of fire—rose up the sky. Shock troops of our unit dashed forward, putting enemy planes and helicopters out of action one after another. Enemy soldiers assigned to the protection of the place were frightened into complete inactivity. Two undamaged choppers attempted to take off but at an altitude of barely 50 meters they blew up to pieces.

"Their mission fulfilled, the various groups of our unit returned to their regrouping place. Meanwhile the fire kept on mounting from the airfield and did not go out before the next day."

"You know the result of the attack" the unit leader merrily added after a pause. "Please take this field-glass and have a look at the airfield!"

Through the field-glass, I saw very distinctly all the enemy choppers, badly hit and completely deformed, lying about the airfield, some still smouldering. By their side were military vehicles, also entirely distorted, some of them completely upturned. On the Southern border of the airfield a fire occasionally flared up, accompanied by detonations: I guessed it was an ammo depot. A few well-covered vans were running to and fro in a fog of dust to pick up corpses.

A precious encouragement and great support

CHAIRMAN Mao Tsetung, Vice-Chairman Lin Piao and Premier Chou En-lai, on March 29, 1971 sent a message of warm congratulations to Lawyer Nguyen Huu Tho, President Huynh Tan Phat and the leaders of the Indochinese countries on their recent victories, particularly the great victory on Highway 9.

Sharing the joy of the Indochinese peoples, the Chinese Party and State leaders said in this message:

"This victory is of great strategic importance. You have brought into play the unparalleled might of the people's war, attained new heights in your fighting capability and gained new experience. You have struck painful blows at the US aggressors and defeated their aggressive scheme, landing the Nixon government in a more difficult position and making things tougher for it. Your victory has fully demonstrated that the strength of the unity of the three peoples of Indochina is powerful and invincible."

On this occasion, *Giai Phong Press Agency* released an editorial expressing the South Viet Nam people and their armed forces' gratitude towards Chairman Mao Tsetung, the Communist Party, Government and people of China. The editorial said:

"This is a precious and heart-warming encouragement from the 700 million Chinese people, who have long been tightly connected with the struggle for independence and freedom of the Vietnamese people in particular and of the peoples of the Indochinese countries in general. The heartfelt words expressed in the message of Esteemed Chairman Mao Tsetung is a great stimulus for the Indochinese peoples to go forward to fulfil their glorious historic mission and international obligations.

"From the forefront of the Vietnamese people's struggle against US aggression, for national salvation, the South Vietnamese people and armed forces, feel deeply moved at, and grateful to, the precious encouragement of the leaders of the Communist Party, Government and people of Great China."

GREETINGS TO THE CPSU CONGRESS

THE South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation Central Committee, on March 25, sent a message of greetings to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

It said: "Over the past half century, under the leadership of the glorious CPSU founded by V.I. Lenin, the heroic Soviet people have written down brilliant pages of history. The successful great October Revolution ushered in a new era in the history of the human society development. Particularly the profound thoughts of Lenin on the problem of 'Nation' and the glorious victory of the October Revolution have shown the way for and strongly pushed ahead, the liberation movement in the world."

After warmly hailing the Soviet Army's glorious victories during World War Two and the Soviet people's great achievements in economy, national defence, culture, science and technology, especially in the conquest of space the message pointed out:

"The South Vietnamese people greatly admire and highly value the great achievements recorded by the fraternal Soviet people and regard them as a common success of progressive mankind and a strong stimulus for their own liberation struggle and that of millions of people in the world. On this occasion we sincerely express our deep gratitude for the sympathy, precious, effective and ever greater support and assistance reserved by the Communist Party, Government and fraternal people of the Soviet Union for the Vietnamese people."

The message pointed to the heavy losses suffered by the US imperialists in their perfidious scheme of continuing the war of aggression in Indochina. It highlighted the recent great victories of the Indochinese peoples and said: "Promoting to the highest degree the tradition of persistent and dauntless struggle of the nation, enjoying the ever greater support and assistance from the Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries and friends in the five continents, including the progressive people in the United States, the South Vietnamese people will certainly fulfil their lofty national duty of liberating the South, defending the North and proceeding to the peaceful reunification of the country, thus actively contributing to the common struggle of the world's peoples against imperialism, for national independence, democracy, peace and social progress."

"We sincerely wish the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union splendid success. We wish the glorious Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet people more brilliant achievements in building the Soviet Union into a mighty country and safeguarding peace in Europe and in the rest of the world.

"May the friendship and militant solidarity between the South Vietnamese people be ever consolidated!"

March 1971

Adverse bitter setbacks in South Viet Nam

IN co-ordination with the brother Lao army and people who were foiling the aggressive Operation "Lam Son 719," the South Vietnamese army and people launched a stirring emulation movement to wipe out enemy manpower and war material.

Keeping up their offensive, the South Vietnamese army and people began March with a series of murderous battles: repeated attacks in North Quang Tri in four days on units of the US 5th Motorized Infantry Division, on adverse operational bases along Highway 9, and on hills around Khe Sanh and Ta Con, putting out of action 335 enemy troops, mostly Americans, the quick March 1 knocking out of Battalion One of the 42nd Regiment on Hill 935 in Dakto (High Plateaux); the March 2 assault against Song Mao base where 550 men of Regiment 44 were put out of combat; assaults on the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in Binh Dinh and the US naval base in Ca Mau, and levelling of hundreds of posts in the Delta of Central Trung Bo and the Mekong River in the following days.

The People's Liberation Armed Forces sought out the adversary right in their dens, and at the same time intercepted their reinforcements or sporadic "dislodgement" raids in March.

The enemy large-scale mopping-up operation between March 1 and 4 in the High Plateaux to make good their bitter reverse in Dakto was also beaten off with even greater losses: 700 casualties, including one battalion completely wiped out and 2 battalions heavily decimated. The operation in Rach Gia by puppet Division 21, after over 100 days of action, ended in mid-March with 6,500 adverse men put out of combat, 30 tanks and other armoured vehicles destroyed, 35 aircraft downed and over 100 river craft or launches sunk or set on fire.

The PLAF overran also many military sub sectors in Central Trung Bo such as Duc Duc (Quang Nam) and in the Mekong River Delta such as Cang Long (Tra Vinh). The relentless actions were widespread from the beginning to the end of the month. The enemy admitted that the tempo of the attack became even quicker in the last days of March.

On March 29 alone, the patriotic forces engaged the adversary in 46 battles in all the coastal provinces of Central Trung Bo, and March 31 a joint battalion of puppet infantry and artillery was written off on Hill 1001 in Dakto (High Plateaux).

While the US Command had not recovered from the highly devastating engagements in the High Plateaux, in Central Trung Bo and West Nam bo, the virtual wiping out of Battalion 1/46 of the 196th puppet Airborne Brigade, 42 km south-west of Tam Ky greatly frightened the US-quislings and produced a commotion both in the White House and the Pentagon. Western sources revealed that never before had the US sustained such heavy losses in a single battle within a short time since the start of this war (*AFP*).

The South Vietnamese army and people also assailed communication lines, wrecked vehicles, grounded airplanes, shelled river craft or combat launches and destroyed a lot of war material. Incessant and furious assaults on adverse means of transport took place on the road section from the Cua Viet rivermouth and Dong Ha to the Laos-Viet Nam border where the enemy losses in war material were reported as heaviest.

In March, more than 320 military vehicles were put out of commission, 83 aircraft shot down and 23 river craft or launches sunk or shot afire. The Cua Viet rivermouth was on many occasions blocked up and Highway 9 cut off in many places and became an "alley of ambushes" as described by Western reporters. Similar violent onsets were also mounted on Highways 19 and 21 (Central Trung Bo and High Plateaux), on Highways 13 and 14 (East Nam Bo), on Highway 4 (Mekong River Delta) and on National Route number One. A prominent feature in the period under review was the destruction of many adverse military convoys on these roads, and the derailing of several military trains on the road linking Da Nang to Tri-Thien-Hue.

Besides, the PLAF continued striking at puppet "civil guards" and militiamen, punishing wicked thugs and helping people demolish "strategic hamlets," shatter the enemy grip and regain control of the countryside. In Kontum province (High Plateaux), many such hamlets were pulled down by guerillas and the regional army. In only 5 days ended March 20, 1,300 people left these disguised concentration camps for their home villages. In the first half of March, the liberation fighters in West Nam Bo forced the adversary to withdraw 14 posts, helped 60,000 inmates rise up to disintegrate or control 80 "strategic hamlets." A stirring atmosphere of general uprising was again prevailing in many places.

While the US and its hirelings were bogged down neck-deep and badly battered in South Laos, deadly blows given them by the South Vietnamese army and people in all battlefields last March made their confusion most confounded. Their troops' morale sank lower than ever before. The aforesaid heavy combat losses cut a big slash in the enemy military strength and equipment while most of their crack forces and new war material were lost on Highway 9. What Nixon has been trumpeting about, such as a "secure situation," "stable position in the battlefield," "vigorous growth of the Saigon army," "ever lower US casualties"... have now been bared as a deception by the realities on the South Viet Nam battlefront in the past few months.

HOW OPERATION "LAM SON 719" UNFOLDS INTO A FLOP

HILL 550 STORMED

(Account of the wiping out of a Saigon Marine Brigade in South Laos)

PREPARING for the invasion of Southern Laos, the US and the Saigon regime launched at the end of January 1971 Operation "Dewey Canyon II" west of the provinces of Quang Tri and Thua Thien (which was in fact the staging area). They fielded along Highway 9 (north of Quang Tri) their most seasoned units which counted at the outset 30,000 men composed of GIs of the 101st Airborne Division, "Americal" Division, the First Brigade of the 5th Motorized Infantry Division and of the Saigon puppet elements of the Para Division, the First Ranger Battalion-group, the First Infantry Division, the 11th and 17th Armoured Squadrons and many artillery battalions.

Early in March 1971, with as reinforcements the puppet Marine Division (consisting of the 147th and 258th Brigades), the 4th and 7th Armoured Squadrons and many other American and puppet battalions, the enemy strength rose to about 45,000 men.

This operation was supported by the "most powerful air force ever deployed in the Indochina war": in fact 800 helicopters (500 at the initial stage) and 1,500 fighter planes (against 1,000 initially) provided the "maximum" air cover for the Saigon army in troop transport, supply, evacuation of casualties, fire barrage.

All this huge build-up was mustered along the section of Highway 9 from Dong Ha to Lao Bao, with the Huong Hoa — Lang Vay area as staging base. The operational HQ of Saigon General Hoang Xuan Lam commanding the operation, was shifted to Khe Sanh together with all its group of American "advisors." The operation was nominally assigned to Hoang Xuan Lam but actually blueprinted by Melvin Laird at Nixon's injunction and directly commanded by Abrams.

With the wild dream of delivering a stunning blow at the enemy to create a "turning point" likely to bring "Vietnamization" a basic success, the American brasshats embarked headlong on this venture with such major objectives as:

— Control Highway 9, set enclaves on some important points, chiefly Tchepone, Muong Phin and if possible, proceed to Savannakhet in order to make a junction with the Vientiane army in the west; carry out large-scale "mopping ups" to destroy adverse depots and cut off adverse transportation system.

— Wipe out substantial enemy manpower and create a "military posture" favorable to the US.

— Parallel with the cutting off the supply route, check the advance, and deplete the fighting forces, of the patriots in South Viet Nam, Cambodia and Southern Laos.

— Use the eventual success of the operation to boost the morale of the GIs and puppet troops, and advertise the progress of the "Nixon doctrine" and "Vietnamization" policy, thereby raising the "prestige" of the Nixon clique and securing an advantage ground to keep the two "presidential" seats.

For the realization of this great scheme, the US and Saigon quislings planned the operation in three steps:

Firstly, a lightning attack to occupy Ban Dong scheduled for February 8; *secondly* occupy Tchepone on February 10, and *thirdly* make a deeper thrust westward, remain there till the adverse supply route was completely crippled or at least till the beginning of the rainy season.

To throw dust into public eyes and keep the scheme secret, the enemy released no information to the press, and concocted such stories as airdropping on the Boloven High Plateau and other fabrications to camouflage the main operation.

BEGINNING OF AGGRESSION AND BEGINNING OF FAILURE

ON February 4, 1971, Abrams' command made public the plan of aggression against Southern Laos and on February 8, Nguyen Van Thieu gave the green light to the Saigon army to start Operation "Lam Son 719."

After a fire barrage by American aircraft including B.52s, on the morning of February 8, over 10,000 Saigon puppet troops were ferried by helicopters across the Viet Nam-Laos border in three prongs:

— The main body covered by Para Brigade 1, and Armoured Squadrons 11 and 17 and a "Task Force" Brigade, headed for Ban Dong. In the rear, were Para Brigade 2 and Armoured Squadrons 4 and 7, as reserve forces.

— The northern wing was made up by Para Brigade 3 and Ranger Battalions - group 1 helilifted to set enclaves on Peak 405 and 619, followed later on by Regiment 1 of Infantry Division 1.

In the rear, to man a staging base for the campaign and serve as reinforcements for the puppet troops in case of need, American infantrymen were deployed on Vietnamese territory.

As soon as the aggressors set foot on Laos they were immediately intercepted.

They were prevented from reaching Tchepone town, target No 1 of the drive. All their three prongs were constantly harassed. In 6 days (from February 5 to 10) 80 US aircraft were downed (42 on February 10 over, Chaki, Ban Dong and Phu Co Bok). The enemy were battered in the sky as well as on the ground. On February 9, 10 and 11, at Ban Dong, puppet Para Brigade 1 and Armoured Squadron 17 were badly beaten: 5 companies were wiped out and 30 tanks and armoured cars destroyed.

While the Saigon troops were receiving a thrashing in Southern Laos, on the Highway 9 — Khe Sanh area, the enemy was unremittingly assaulted at Dong Ha, Tan Lam, Sa Muu, Khe Soc, on Hills 241, 230 216... Many road convoys from Dong Ha to Khe Sanh were intercepted and wrecked on the sections from Cam Lo to Tan Lam and from Sa Muu to Huong Hoa. Many war vessels were sunk on the Cua Viet River.

Thus, in the first stage of the invasion of South Laos, the GIs and Saigon puppet troops were hit in the forefront as well as in the rearbase, in the sky as well as on the ground; the puppet motorized infantrymen and American aircraft and war vessels suffered heavy losses. All the three groups were immediately stopped short at Chaki, Ban Dong and Phu Co Bok.

THE NORTHERN WING SHATTERED, THE ENEMY PINNED DOWN AT BAN DONG

AFTER strenuous efforts to reach Chaki, Ban Dong and Phu Co Bok, the Saigon troops tried to fan out to consolidate their foothold and set a spring board. But it was labour lost.

They totally depended on American choppers which were completely overcome by ack-ack fire of the liberation armed forces, which made very hard and sometimes impossible such tasks as troop transport, supply, evacuation of casualties and providing fire cover for the puppet troops.

To relieve the Saigon invading army struggling desperately toward Tchepone, on February 2, on orders from the US, the Vientiane rushed Phalane so as to divert the punch of the patriotic forces. The attempt failed and one Vientiane battalion was wiped out. Following up this gain, the liberation forces made a deep thrust into Dong Hien, occupied Nong Bua Lao and Huoi Mun, and routed Vientiane Mobile Battalions group 33 south of Muong Phin, landing the US aggressors in a greater quandary.

(*Continued on page 9*)

AFTER the 3rd Saigon Regiment had been knocked out in Phu Co Bok area, the US-quislings airdropped the 147th Marine Brigade belonging to their strategic total reserve forces on Hill 550 area, south of Highway number 9, to check the widespread and stormy attacks by the liberation army in South Laos. But the patriotic fighters were waiting for them in all majestic mountains and jungles of South Laos.

Right after setting foot on the hill, the brigade took nearly 300 casualties. The remaining troops had to dig in in a dense cluster on the hill to resist the Lao LAF repeated assaults. The 258th Saigon Marine Brigade, helilifted on Co Roc area to reinforce Brigade 147, was also stopped from rescuing the battered troops.

With singleness of purpose, the liberation fighters of the Column Y, who had just trounced the 3rd Saigon Regiment, had been since March 16 assaulting the enemy without respite and putting out of action clusters of outer enclaves of the brigade. At the same time, they intercepted the enemy "search and destroy" prongs, and continually slammed devastating artillery fire on many of their strong fortifications and storages. The liberation anti-aircraft gunners wove a dense flak around adverse helicopters, grounding many of them and preventing the latter from dropping supplies to the besieged troops. The 147th Brigade was completely isolated. The three infantry battalions and the Brigade CP sustained heavy losses. Many commanding officers who had "dug in" in their strongholds also could not escape punishment from the Lao LAF murderous shellings. The enemy brigade commander received serious wounds as his shelter was hit.

While fighting was raging, the Lao PLA Command issued an appeal which, like a combat clarion, greatly fired the Column Y fighters forward. The whole unit was burning with the impatience of recording exploit and annihilating the enemy brigade. Despite the burning sun and adverse bombing and shelling, the liberation fighters continued closing in upon the adversary and Hill 520 now lay within the Lao LAF range.

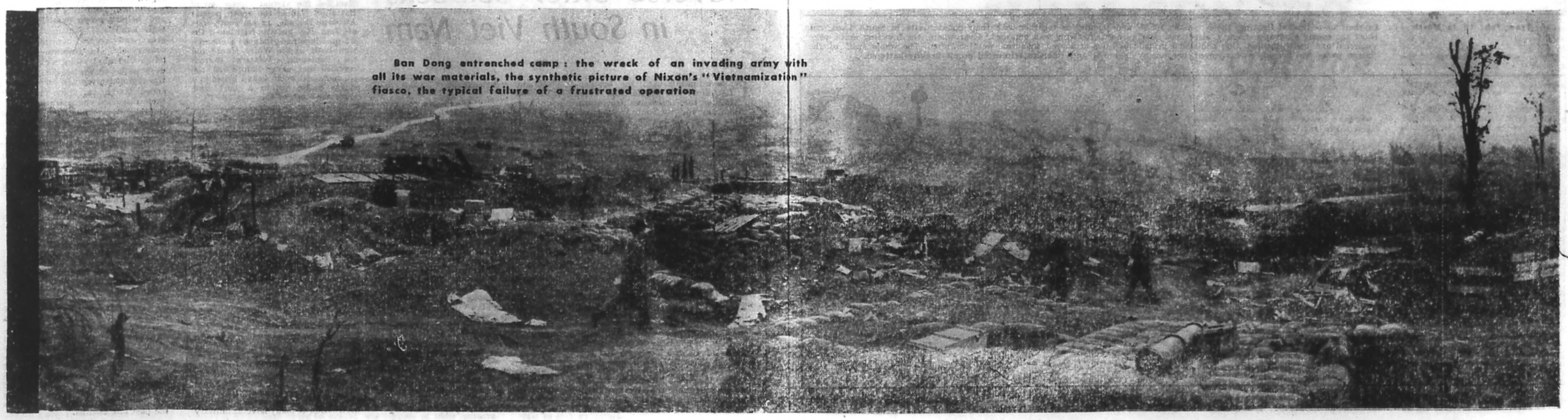
The Column Y headquarters, had been all in a bustle for a few days now. The unit military commander, political commissar, staff and logistic officers, all sat around a big map, closely following the LPLF narrowing encirclement and accelerating assaults on the enemy.

The telephone kept ringing constantly. The attacking prongs one after another informed the CP about their state of combat readiness. The front intelligence group also reported: At 4 p.m. today, the enemy units in the outer perimeter withdrew and massed around the brigade headquarters. All day long, adverse aircraft could not land. A soldier just taken prisoner said that Brigade 147 had in the past two days suffered severe losses, and had been running short of ammunition, food and drinking water. The adverse troops had day and night to "dig in" in their entrenchments, and the commanders could not control their men.

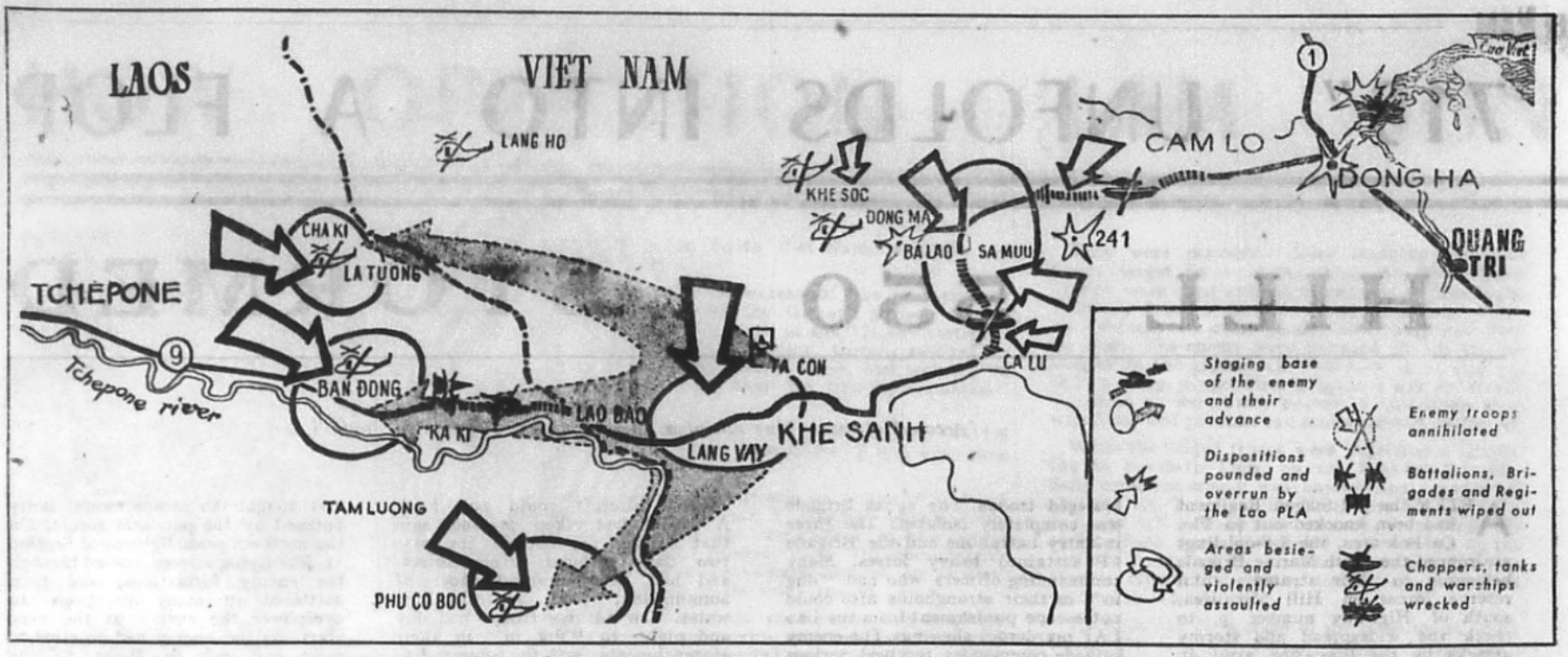
At 4 p.m. sharp on March 22, hardly had the Column Commander's orders for attack been given, hundreds of shells one after another were lobbed on the brigade CP area, artillery emplacements, signal centres and clusters of troops, churning up the hill ground and battering down many strong fortifications. The gun-sites were silenced, many storages set on fire and furiously exploded, shaking the nearby jungle. The whole enemy base was drowned in a deluge of fire. As soon as the LPLF guns stopped hammering, LPLF tanks cleared the way and rumbled into the enemy CP, and swept away all the gun-nests. Rows of shelters were levelled, and many machine-guns and mortars crushed to pieces. The liberation infantrymen quickly stream into the enemy base, and with petards and AK rifles wiped out group after group of enemy troops. They called to them to surrender, took prisoner many of them and captured a lot of weapons. A number of die-hards who dug in in caves to resist were immediately cut down. Many others who had thrown down their arms and sought to escape were hotly pursued by the patriotic forces. On the northern peak, fighters of Section 11, like flying arrows, rushed through the enemy formations, and then scattered in many directions to overpower the enemy at the very start. As the enemy had no time to react and took to flight to the southern peak leaving behind their guns, the liberation fighters of Section 1,9 and 20 immediately intercepted them on the hill flanks, forced them into clusters to mow them down with AK rifles. Enemy bodies piled up on the ground, and wounded soldiers screamed. The survivors flung down their arms and fled in disorder into the jungle, but the liberation fighters were hot on their heels. The enemy gun-sites in Lao Bao, Co Roc and of the 258th Marine Brigade in Co Roc area were prevented by our heavy fire from giving support to the troops on Hill 550. Many aircraft which came to drop flares were quickly knocked down.

At 8 p.m. on March 22, the fighters of Army Column Y seized complete control of the hill, wiped out in no time the puppet 147th Marine Brigade and captured numerous prisoners, including many commanding officers, and collected all their weapons including 12 105mm and 155mm guns, and signal equipment and important documents.

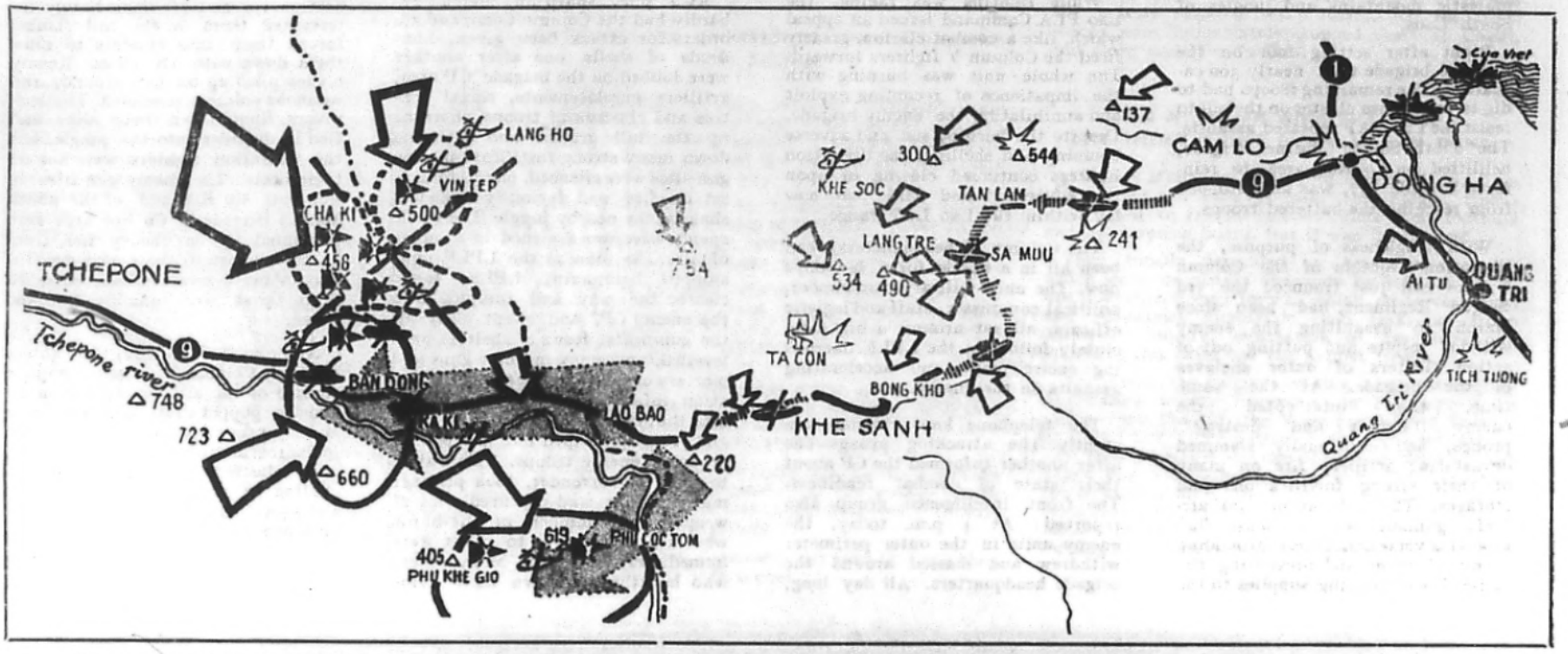
This was another outstanding feat of Army Column Y.



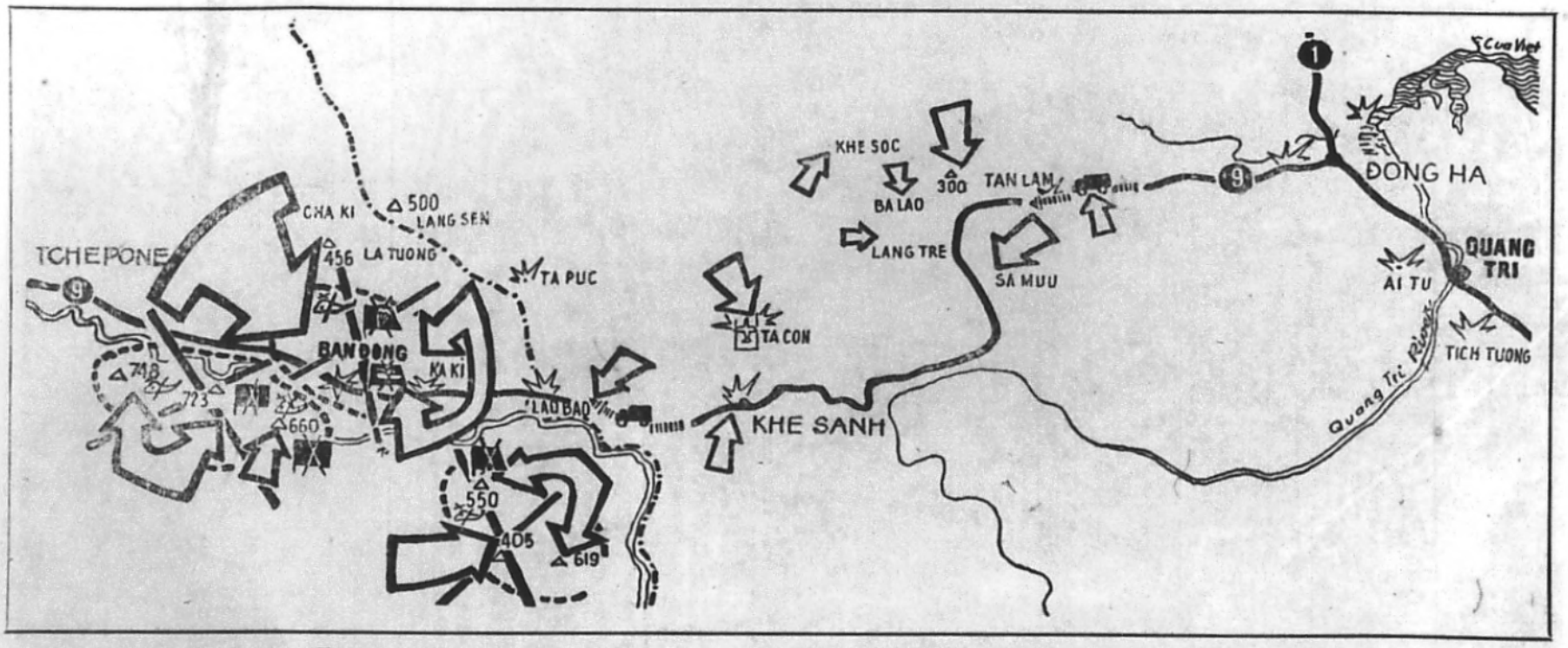
Ban Dong entrenched camp: the wreck of an invading army with all its war materials, the synthetic picture of Nixon's "Vietnamization" fiasco, the typical failure of a frustrated operation



From Feb. 8 to 11: From 3 directions, enemy thrusts into Ban Dong, Cha Ki and Phu Ko Bok intercepted from the outset. A Saigon para battalion swiftly annihilated at Kaki Bridge.



From Feb. 12 to March 11: In their co-ordinated fighting, the Khe Sanh PLAF and population together with their counterparts in South Laos, cut short the enemy's advance from 3 directions. Enemy northern wing was smashed. Everywhere, the invading units were encircled and badly mauled. One additional brigade and one armoured squadron were shattered. The whole staff of the Saigon paras' 3rd brigade was captured, one enemy regiment and Rangers reinforced group heavily battered.



From March 12 to 22: Enemy southern wing crushed. Ban Dong main base camp encircled, overrun and annihilated, 2 regiments and 3 brigades wiped out. Another brigade seriously trounced. The US - puppet aggressive operation was completely foiled.

HOW OPERATION "LAM SON 719"...

(*Continued from page 6*)

It was at that time that the patriots staged a decisive action by fighting on February 13 two fierce battles during which they knocked out Saigon Ranger Battalion 21 at La Tuong and Battalion 6 of Para Brigade 3 upon its landing southwest of Chaki.

On Nixon's orders, American and Saigon brasshats, Abrams, Thieu, Cao Van Vien and others, in succession, flew to Khe Sanh to take a look at the serious situation. But the Lao PLAF noose continued to tighten around the places where Saigon troops were massed.

In close co-ordination with their South Lao counterparts, the South Viet Nam PLAF struck repeatedly at the enemy on Highway 9, sealing off the latter's supply route, increasing their pressure on US bases from Dong Ha to Lao Bao, blotting out important logistic depots in Ai Tu and Tich Tuong, bombarding violently the adverse HQ at Dong Ha, Khe Sanh as well as Ta Con and Ta Pac bases.

On Feb. 19 and 20, the South Viet Nam PLAF on the Khe Sanh front launched a vigorous offensive against Hill 500 with strong artillery and infantry units covered by AA batteries and did short work of the Saigon 39th Ranger Battalion.

On Feb. 25, the Lao PLAF assaulted Hill 456, north of Ban Dong. The Saigon 3rd Para Battalion was in its turn written off. The LPLAF got entire control of the battlefield, captured more than 100 men and collected a great haul of war material. Fired by this success, they stormed the HQ of the 3rd Para Brigade, took prisoner the Colonel commanding this unit with all his staff.

On Feb. 26 the US Command threw the 8th Battation of the Saigon 2nd Para Brigade, and the 11th and 17th Armoured Squadrons transferred from Ban Dong into a counter-offensive to reoccupy Hill 456. On March 3, the PLAF managed to lure them into a trap where the 8th Para Battalion and the 17th Armoured Squadron were wiped out and the 11th Armoured Squadron depleted. So the enemy's main forces on the northern wing were crushed. They realized that their flank had been exposed but dared not to call any more troops into the Chaki and La Tuong area, now concentrating their troops on the main point and the southern wing. They dispatched the 2nd Para Brigade and new armoured units to Ban Dong and the remaining units of the 1st and 2nd Regiments of the 1st Infantry Division to the southern wing.

The PLAF saw through the enemy intention. They struck two successive telling blows at the 1st Infantry Division. On Feb. 27, after two days' encirclement, they knocked out the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Regiment on Hill 405, in the Phu Ke Gio area. On March 1, in a series of assaults, they wiped out the 3rd Battalion of the same regiment on Hill 619, in the Phu Coc Tom area. Afterwards, they trounced the 1st Battalion and destroyed the CP of the above-mentioned regiment.

The routing of the 3rd Regiment seriously weakened the enemy's southern wing. The adverse command had to have this unit replaced by the 147th Marine Brigade. They moved two regiments of the Saigon 2nd Division from Central Trung Bo to Highway 9 together with three battalions of the American 101st Airborne Division. The Americans sent a reinforcement of 100 helicopters and 170 tanks to Ban Dong, the spearhead of the drive. At the same time, the puppets released the hoax of the capture of Tchepone in a press conference, rewarded their imaginary heroes, published reports on their fictitious victory... to boost the morale of the troops then sagging alarmingly.

THE SOUTHERN WING BROKEN, THE BAN DONG MAIN BASE STORMED, OPERATION "LAM SON 719" COMPLETELY SHIPWRECKED

BY early March 1971, of all the US-puppet forces flung into the invasion of Southern Laos there remained only the units marshalled on, and South of, Highway 9. But every one of their positions was encircled and came under PLAF violent fire. The adverse command intended, in a commando raid, to infiltrate some of their units into Tchepone, to be able to announce that their objective had been attained and their plan fulfilled, before retiring their troops to South Viet Nam. But all their schemes were thwarted.

On March 6, in an attempted landing on Ta Pang, their helicopters suffered heavy losses: 6 of them were downed and the others put to flight. Another air drop was made on Hill 748 but on March 12, the Saigon 2nd Regiment severely drubbed there had to withdraw to Hill 660.

From March 13 to 16, the PLAF tightened their stranglehold around Hill 723 while their AA fire power wove a deadly web in the air. The 1st Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division on the hill was destroyed as the US choppers could not get through the patriots' flak to rescue them. At the same time, the puppet Marines, who had just occupied Hills 550,475 and 545, targets of the Southern wing, were subject to waves of attacks. On March 3, the PLAF achieved a new exploit on Hill 660, by wiping out almost completely the 2nd Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division.

So both the northern and southern wings were broken. The survivors of the operation now rallied on Highway 9 and chiefly in the main base of Ban Dong where they dug in.

On other battlefields throughout Indochina, patriotic forces mounted successful well-coordinated actions. The South Viet Nam PLAF raided enemy bases and coertion machine in Central Trung Bo, overran two regiment CPs of the Saigon 21st Regular Division in Western Nam Bo, wiped out 4 battalions near Dakto, in the Western Highlands whereas the population in the Mekong Delta rose up and dismantled the network of strategic hamlets. In Northern Laos, the Lao PLA rushed the Vang Pao bandits' centre at Xam Thong – Long Cheng, depleted Vientiane troops at Pak Ou and Pak Xung, knocked out a Vientiane battalion in the Boloven Plateau. In Cambodia, the NLAF foiled Operation "Complete Victory 1-71," putting out of action 8,000 enemy troops, destroying 950 military vehicles, 50 war planes and 100 heavy guns.

On the Khe Sanh front, the SVN PLAF of North Quang Tri staged attack after attack against almost all the US-puppet bases at Ta Con, Ta Puc, Khe Sanh, Dong Ha ... In their ambushes, they managed to smash important enemy convoys on the Lao Bao – Lang Vay and Sa Muu – Tan Lam road sections and sent many enemy warships to the bottom of the Cua Viet River. Their rear being in an utter disarray, the enemy were unable either to rescue their troops in distress or evacuate them.

Meanwhile, their main base in Ban Dong, with the 1st Special Armoured Brigade, the 1st Para Brigade and other paratroop battalions, clustered between Ban Dong and Kaki Bridge, inside the narrowing PLAF stranglehold. Using overwhelming firepower and applying close-range pressure, the PLAF cut off every road and every airway, to prevent all adverse evacuations of troops. On March 17, the encirclement was further tightened. On March 18, with strong support of artillery and AA batteries, PLAF infantry and armoured troops made a large-scale offensive. After three days' fighting, they wiped out the 1st Para Brigade and the greater part of the Special Armoured Brigade and became masters of the battlefield. With the storming of the Ban Dong main base, the US strategic offensive in Southern Laos came to a flop.

In the flush of their victory, the PLAF closed in upon the fleeing enemy troops, inflicted on them serious losses at Huoi Xam on March 21 and 22. They also violently assaulted the 147th Marine Brigade on Hill 550, wiping out the greater part of this unit and its artillery base, thereby sealing the fate the US-Saigon military adventure codenamed "Operation Lam Son 719."

"LAM SON 719" *and Saigon Opinion*

The Saigon administration is striving to wrest facts and thereby minimize its humiliating disaster in Operation Lam Son 719. *Saigon opinion quoted below gives the lie to this attempt, and at the same time stigmatizes US prolongation of the aggressive war against the Indochinese countries through "Vietnamization."*—Ed.

Dien Tin (Telegraph), Fev. 23: "It's disheartening indeed to see that South Vietnamese army commanders do not care about our officers and men. These were sent to a remote and dangerous front with no roads and an extremely inclement climate. Everything depended upon the United States... What happened on the Lao battlefield in the first few days was enough to supply every Vietnamese with a lesson: to fight with others' means is suicide."

About the US "Vietnamization" policy, *Tin Sang* (March 1, 2 and 3) wrote: "We have seen that 'the light at the end of the tunnel' was put out and that 'Vietnamization of the war' is nothing short of a prolongation of the war for ever..."

"Following the onslaughts on Cambodia and Laos it is everyone's opinion that the Nixon administration has reached a high degree of rashness, being driven into an impasse.

"Mr Nixon is seeking peace for Viet Nam with 5 billion tons of bombs and 105 billion dollars in arms and ammunition; he is seeking peace at the cost of one million lives of young Indochinese and of 250,000 sons of the American people... The Nixon doctrine is synonymous with death, sufferings and misery for both Americans and Vietnamese... Nobody can refrain from flying into a rage when listening to American mandarin's optimistic declarations while too many young Vietnamese have fallen on the battlefield.

"We should frankly tell the Americans that they should stop their farce of dealing in corpses and that they should not think that others stand ready to die in their stead for their dollars."

"Nixon takes to task the press," *Tin Sang* went on, "so that public opinion may not see the fiasco of the Nixon doctrine, for reality is so harsh...

"To die to end the extreme sufferings of one's fellow-countrymen, for justice, is worthwhile. But to die in implementation of the 'change of the colour of the corpses' policy is senseless."

Cong Luan (Public Opinion) commented on the US-Saigon troops' retreat as follows: "American leaders have made use of the Lao battlefield in political issues of the United States... For the first time in the history of the Viet Nam war, Vietnamese combatants had to make the greatest sacrifices in fighting conditions that had not been carefully studied."

On the prospects of the war and its consequences, Pham Van Tam, a member of the Saigon Senate, said: "War is spreading more than ever before. 1971 has been marked by an incursion into Laos while operations in Cambodia grew fiercer. It has been asserted that peace will be restored within two or three years, so for two or three more years we shall have to make more sacrifices in money and blood..." Turning to the Nixon doctrine, Tam stated: "Vietnamization means sacrifices to be endured by Vietnamese in the place of the Americans or shifting losses onto the Vietnamese."

According to the *Cong Luan*, March 13, a number of high-ranking officials in Saigon had raised their voices in the same vein: "Vietnamization of the war has transformed Vietnamese into mercenaries... The United States has proved unable to confront one country – Viet Nam. Now forced to deal with three countries – Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos – it will have to strike at a stone block with an egg."

Puppet troops have also become more and more vocal about the Lao campaign. "They speak of victory when corpses are being brought in huge numbers to Saigon," an officer commented. "Every man for himself! The sooner you run away, the better. Or you'll be forced to fight in Cambodia or Laos, and leave your skin there!".

That is what mercenaries in My Tho city are striving to do.

Desertion and disintegration in the Saigon army are alarming the Thieu-Ky-Khiem junta. All the more so as soldiers' families, too, are protesting against their sons and relatives being sent to their death in the place of Americans.

MARCH 1971

A remarkable month in LAOS

GIs and Saigon troops in their rout: helicopter carrying their dead and wounded

MARCH was marked by the foiling by the Lao army and people in co-ordination with their South Vietnamese counterparts of the US-Saigon Operation "Lam Son 719" on Highway number 9. They alone wiped out 15,400 enemy troops including 200 GIs, took prisoner 1,000 others, including many officers, wrecked or captured 496 aircraft and 586 military vehicles (including 318 tanks and other armoured cars), 144 guns and more than 5,000 rifles of various types, and seized many important documents and military equipment.

To cover up this humiliating disaster, the Vientiane authorities sent 3 battalions from Savannakhet province capital to Muong Phalan area, for a show of strength. But they were engaged in furious fighting by the Lao People's Liberation Army and suffered one battalion heavily decimated, 200 men killed or wounded, 20 others captured and 70 firearms seized.

Attacks were mounted on the enemy in many other places, aggravating their defensive posture and preventing them from co-ordinating actions with, and giving rescue to, the troops involved in Operation "Lam Son 719."

In South Laos, from March 8 to 10, the LPLA ambushed the Vientiane troops east of Boloven High Plateaux and Nam Luc area, wiping out one battalion and severely depleting three other ones. They also hammered the positions of Vientiane Battalion 44 in Khong Sedon, Huoi Sai (Saravane area), Dong Hen (Savannakhet province), wounding the battalion commander and inflicting considerable adverse losses in lives and war material.

In North Laos, in the first 10 days of March, they fought 30 battles in areas Southwest of the Plain of Jars, knocking out 267 enemy soldiers, took prisoner 15 others, seized 51 rifles and burned 40,000 litres of petrol. In the assault on Na Xu (20 km west of Long Cheng), on March 9 alone, 65 adverse men were killed or wounded, 10 vehicles destroyed and 4,000 litres of petrol set on fire. Clusters of enemy defensive strongholds in Hin Tang, Tham Lung (Xieng Khoang province) and many other surrounding positions were also raided on March 21 and 22 and took 200 casualties. The remainder abandoned the positions and fled in disorder.

In addition, the Lao liberation fighters assailed the adversary in Pak Ou, Ban Thich and Phu Doc May areas, and shelled Luang Prabang airport. According to *AFP*, "Up to March 29, fighting continued to rage around Luang Prabang for 9 consecutive days." As reported by *KPL*, the attacks on the CPs of Tactical Column 872 and Battalion BV-101 and Luang Prabang military airport took a toll of 226 men put out of action (including 40 captured), five 57mm recoilless guns and three 81mm and 60mm mortars seized, 7 aircraft and a large quantity of war material blasted out of commission.

All told, March 1971 was a highly fruitful month of the brother Lao army and people. The Lao PLAF not only joined the Vietnamese army and people in shaking the White House and the Pentagon with their dramatic gains but also gave ample illustrations of their quick and comprehensive growth, high combativeness and fighting skill and the smooth co-ordination among their army branches. They have further upheld their tradition as successful fighters and have earned universal praise.

"LAM SON 719," A NIGHTMARE, A HUMILIATING RETREAT

THAT remark of US Senator E. Kennedy on the US-Saigon-aggressive operation in Laos gave only a partial picture of the field and spoke up the common feeling of the world opinion.

"The retreat of the Saigon troops from Laos is reminiscent of the Dunkirk battle... Saigon forces have met with a decisive setback, wrote the *South China Morning Post* published in Hong Kong on March 22. The French paper *Combat* said on March 24: "The retreat of the South Viet Nam (puppet Ed.) troops ended in a helter-skelter flight. *The Sunday Times* (UK) wrote on March 28: The so-called "withdrawal" of the US-Saigon troops was only "a rout". The *Christian Seience Monitor* (US) described on March 25 the disorderly retreat of the battered Saigon troops to South Viet Nam in these terms "Panic, demoralization of the troops who are not ready to fight, that is the particular trait of the units said to be the élite of the Saigon (puppet Ed.) army."

US magazine *Life* carried on March 28 a report from the field by its correspondent John Saar. The report said: "The South Vietnamese (puppet Ed.) withdrawal from Laos was an ignominious and disorderly retreat... The losses were considerably higher than officially reported... Operation Lam Son 719 ended in a rout."

Under the title *Vocal Warfare* the English paper *Time* sneered on March 29 at the efforts of the US-Saigon authorities to conceal their reverses in Southern Laos. The US daily *International Herald Tribune* remarked on March 25: "Though Washington and Saigon are trying to pretend optimism, the painful fact remains that the Laos operation is far from meeting the expectation of the American and South Viet Nam military planners." The *New York Times* titled its editorial. *"The Credibility Gap Will Remain Hard To Close"* and wrote: "President Nixon's ill-disguised criticism of press and television coverage of the Laotian operation is likely to benefit him as much as ancient Persian generals were benefitted by killing messengers who brought had news. There is nothing like a big major victory in Laos. That is what Mr Nixon has himself recognized."

The *Financial Times* (UK) said on March 23 that While Nixon and Thieu still can find excuses to publicly argue that the decision to make an incursion into Laos has been justified by its results, both are inwardly regretting the developments of the fight... It is evident that the South Viet Nam (Saigon puppet Ed.) army could not bring itself to bear the hardest blows that the adversary has handed it. The *Times* (UK) remarked on March 28: "South Viet Nam (Saigon puppets)'s intention to control the Ho Chi Minh trail has failed. Right from the outset, the operation has run into major difficulties and it has ended up in a bitter defeat."

The Daily Telegraph of the British Conservative Party emphasized on March 23: "The South Vietnamese (Saigon puppets) have without doubt suffered a severe setback in Laos. It is the defeat which is the most serious aspect for Mr Nixon. For this is bound to stir up a grand inquest in Americans about the soundness of his Viet Nam policy and the extent to which he has been telling the truth... What is likely is that the whole credibility of Mr Nixon's strategy will be called in question."

The British paper *Guardian* cautioned the American President and military bosses that they must know that from now on there can be no other chance for them to solve the Viet Nam question by a military solution.

The *Die Spiegel* (West Germany) remarked on March 23 that the US has been so deeply involved in the war that today it can hardly heed others' advice. If Nixon obstinately pursues his illusory hope of a final victory, the paper added, then not only will the American prisoners of war be waiting in vain but also the whole of America will become a prisoner of the Indochina war.

The French paper *Le Figaro* on March 23 commented: "The bitter defeat of the South Viet Nam army in Laos signifies the recognition of the failure of the much-publicized Vietnamization project in which Nixon has put all his stakes."

The *New York Times* wrote on March 26: "This losing operation is placing Mr Nixon's Vietnamization policy before a gloomy prospect. One year ago, Nixon's popularity stood at 41%. This month it has dropped to 28%, according to a Harris poll. Nixon has survived six crises before stepping into the White House. He is now grappling with the 7th crisis."

Ever larger sections of the political circles in the US have also highlighted the ignominious failure of the US and the Saigon administration in their aggression against Laos and strongly criticized Nixon's obdurate prosecution of the war in Viet Nam and Indochina.

Senator Edward Kennedy declared on March 25: "The operation, which administration officials conceded was cut short because of the intense resistance, was conceived under a senseless news embargo that fooled no one but ourselves."

Senator Edmund S. Muskie on March 27 described the Laos operation as a serious military failure which, he said, "cast doubt on the credibility of the Nixon administration's Vietnamization plan."

Senator McGovern listed many pieces of evidence to support his conviction that the US-Saigon drive into Laos had been seriously defeated by the Lao People's Armed Forces. He said people no longer believed in the pronouncements of the Nixon administration because these were brutal distortions of facts and were all intended to frame up imaginary successes of the operation.

Senator Jacob Javits warned Nixon that his Vietnamization policy might land the ship of the American state right against the same rift that had formerly destroyed the presidency of L.B. Johnson.

In face of the serious failure of the US aggressive war in Viet Nam and Indochina, pressure is building up in the American ruling circles for an open commitment and formal declaration of the US administration to withdraw all US troops from Indochina.

The Democratic Party Council has adopted a resolution urging Nixon to withdraw all US troops from South Viet Nam before the end of 1971.

On March 20, a delegation of congressmen from a dozen states in America came to Washington and handed to the White House and Congress a motion demanding restoration of peace in Viet Nam. Many influential figures in the US administration including the Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, Thomas E. Morgan, Senator E. Kennedy, former Secretary of Defense Clifford, insisted on the total American pull-out of Indochina and cessation of the war in Viet Nam.

Even Kissinger, top adviser of Nixon, had to concede recently that the introduction of US troops into South Viet Nam was a mistake.

Another effect of the US bitter failure on the Highway 9 front in South Viet Nam and Laos is that it has, as Senator Mansfield put it, "increased anti-militarist sentiments in the United States and given a new impetus to the struggle of the American people for an end of the American involvement in Viet Nam."

According to the most recent opinion poll, two out of every three persons approved the total withdrawal of US troops from Viet Nam before the end of this year. *AFP* on March 29 made known that many campaigns were being initiated in Congress as well as among the peace movements in the United States to demand that Nixon pull out speedily all the US troops from South Viet Nam and not to leave behind 50,000 or 100,000 GIs as projected by Nixon. The same source said that the anti-war organizations in the US were beginning large-scale demonstration and planning other anti-war actions across the country to press their demand for an early cessation of the US war in Viet Nam and immediate return of the GI's.

MARCH 1971

CAMBODIAN NLAF CONTINUOUS ATTACKS AND GREAT VICTORIES

IN March 1971, the Cambodian army and people repeatedly and devastatingly attacked the adversary in several places, *AKI* reported.

In Kompong Cham and Kratié provinces, after the first drive of Operation "Total Victory 1-71" was frustrated, the US and Saigon quislings mounted from March 16 to 19 a columnsized operation against North Suong and Snoul area but it also ended in a flop: 5 battalions of puppet Army Column 48 and Regiment 9 were heavily defeated with 1,200 men put out of action, 42 tanks and other armoured vehicles destroyed or seized, and 10 aircraft downed.

Infuriated by these bitter setbacks, on March 26, the US-Saigon hirelings launched another operation, hoping to relieve and defend the system of strongholds on Highway number 22 (from Suong towards southeast) and provide support to the "mop-up" conducted by the Lon Nol clique along the southern bank of Mekong River. The raiding force comprised the reinforced 3rd Cavalry and Armoured Brigade, Armoured Regiments 15 and 18, Battalions 3 and 4 of the 43rd Infantry Regiment, one engineer battalion and 2 companies of heavy artillery with the support of US air force, and artillery, motorized and infantry units of the Saigon 5th Army Column in Suong.

The Kompong Cham NLAF continuously intercepted the enemy both in their front and back, shelled the stationing clusters of the 5th Army Column, the CP of the 3rd Brigade; sprang coups on enemy positions at To-Tea cross-road (on the highway from Chup to Pie Cheang) and other places, and at the same time beat off the enemy in the area 2km from Suong.

On March 29, 1971, the operation conducted by the 3rd Armoured Brigade of the Saigon puppet army against the Chup area has been foiled and the brigade itself, after suffering heavy losses, had to retreat to Suong area.

In Kampot, Kandal, Battambang, Svay Rieng and Prey Vieng provinces, the liberation armed forces also assaulted the Saigon and Lon Nol troops. In Tonle Toch alone, from March 1 to 13 the latter took nearly 1,500 casualties including a major, a captain and a US adviser. In Battambang, the NLAF raided on March 18 and 19 the Ta Neua sugar refinery and fought off reinforcements coming from Kompong Chhnang. 300 Lon Nol troops were wiped out, 16 others captured and 6 military vehicles and dozens of artillery pieces and machine-guns wrecked. Highway number 5 was cut in many places, the traffic brought to a standstill. In Kampot, the patriotic forces violently stormed the oil refinery in Sihanoukville, adverse positions in Tuk Sap, Veal Rinh and ambushed enemy convoys on Highway 4, erasing almost all the sections of the factory, burning 70,000 cubic metres of oil, killing or wounding 350 Lon Nol troops, destroying or damaging 15 military vehicles and one aircraft.

The panic-stricken captain commanding Tuk Sap post with all his men in 3 posts on the road section from Tuk Sap to Veal Rinh crossed over to the PNLAF. On March 25 and 26, the Cambodian armed forces and people in Chup area and along Highway 4 wiped out of action one battalion and one company of the Lon Nol army, seized or destroyed 38 military vehicles, broke an operation of the Saigon 3rd Armoured Brigade.

In co-ordination with the regular army, the regional armed forces and guerillas gave the adversary no respite in Kompong Cham, Kratié, Kampot, Takeo, Kompong Speu and Svay Rieng provinces. They fought the Saigon troops in many battles northeast of Chup, destroying 5 M.113 armoured cars, bringing down 9 aircraft and wiping out 40 enemy troops. They also ambushed the Saigon and Lon Nol soldiers west of Kompong Track on Highway 4, at Snoul market, putting out of action hundreds of men and 14 vehicles.

In a surprise action on Lon Nol troops in Damrei, Pong Peu (about 20 km southeast of Phnom Penh) and Samrong (Takeo) the liberation fighters knocked out nearly 200 men. Also in Snoul, the aircraft hunters in five days ended March 14 grounded 5 US helicopters, killing many GIs on board.

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The military situation in Cambodia in March 1971 proved that the Cambodian army and people not only successfully fought back enemy raids but also continually attached the adversary on all battlefields. During the fighting, the ground troops, artillery and anti-aircraft gunners of the NLAF harmoniously co-ordinated actions, and helped heighten the combat efficiency of their army branches. Together with the regular army, the regional armed forces and guerillas were active on all battlefields and caused many enemy losses. In general, on the Cambodian battlefront, the NLAF continued to steadily develop their strength and hold firm the offensive and won many important military successes.

For an everlasting Spring

WHEN the first bomb was dropped on a quiet "phum" (village) on the Mekong River, people hastened to evacuate. A Honda could be seen carrying a family of 4 or 5, and an ox-cart all their belongings. Exhausted women, their children in one arm and a bundle on the shoulders, gingerly walked on muddy roads. In the shade of a calm pagoda, refugees from different corners met and chatted The war of aggression launched by the Americans and their lackeys was spreading throughout Cambodia. Everywhere one could find refugees but nowhere was there any safe place. At last, they had to return to their native places and begin a war-time life...

Rice-seedlings were already tall and lush but many fields were not yet ploughed. The first men to go ploughing after an air alert were courageous indeed but this was now a mere routine, for people had dug trenches near their paddies. Not far from a US-puppet post on Road 7, the peasants transplanted rice at night. Every time a star shell shot up in the sky they proudly looked at the work done.

In many places waste lands had given way to cassava fields, while in small truck-gardens neat beds of vegetables grew quite close the houses.

Along the Mekong River, only small boats and small fishing nets were seen. Wherever US-puppet armoured cars could make inroads, paddy and other belongings were cleverly hid for the Saigon troops were past masters in discovering the people's hidden caches.

However, all the losses in lives and property did not affect the ebullient atmosphere in the "phum." People thronged into the information hall to read military communiques while a cadre explained a new military or political word to an attentive old man. In the centre of the "phum," some youths were preparing bicycles and a Honda to help a few tired fighters catch up with their unit. At the landing stage, the vice-head of the "phum" pulled out from the water a canoe kept in the river. Two girls carried a basket of cooked rice wrapped in banana leaves to supply the armymen confronting the enemy at the front.

Under the canopy of coconut-palms a group of newly enlisted men began military training. Firm orders were heard: "Carry arms! At ease! Attention!" Aping them, some children with a dark complexion and mock rifles on their shoulders paced up and down under the command of the eldest of them.

Girls also dreamed of joining the Liberation Army "to wipe out the Americans." Though not yet drafted they already led a new life. Every day they cooked rice for the troops, looked after the wounded, guarded the "phum", led alone doing farm work as substitutes for the enlisted men.

At night, the family gathered around a dim lamp of fish oil or kerosene. The girls who knew many military exploits retold them to the old folk. But they also liked the latter to relate old stories of resistance against foreign aggression. In Svay Rieng the aged proudly recounted the story of Cung Im and Ang Ke who left their "phum" to learn how to make weapons to supply the resistance against foreign invasion with. Many places in Svay Rieng like Ba Thu, Ba Vet had been named after their offsprings.

These parties usually went far into the night. The "once upon a time..." stories only stopped when a transistor announced the "latest military successes."

However, the merriest nights were those when the "phum" met in a big house to greet home-coming liberation troops on leave. Boys and girls would dance Lam Thon and Xra Van with the fighters to the accompaniment of the ské drum, the skopay guitar and the payo flute.

... In the fire of the war, the Khmers came to feel more deeply than ever the beauty of their land. Not only were the Siem Reap people proud of their majestic palaces — a wonder of the world — or the Phnom Penh folk of their 26 splendid temples. The natives of Prey Veng would evoke Vyadapura, the town of hunters and the capital of the Funasa Kingdom near Benam with slab-stones recording the exploits of King Isanavarman. The Kampot men and women would refer to Popokville with its silver waterfalls, luxuriant vegetation and colorful butterflies. The Kompong Thom people would compare their town to a fragrant garden attracting bees from all corners of the land. The Battambang population would not brag of their rice granary but would speak of Pailin with its beautiful sapphire and its picturesque fairs.

But what was proudest now was a fact that every Khmer could assert with fresh evidence: the Khmers were a valiant nation. Such a mild people, however, dared to oppose the US aggressors and their Saigon, Phnom Penh lackeys notorious for their potential and violence. A hard working people who had built their country over thousands of years now took up arms to courageously defend their country and bring back an everlating spring.

However, the first trials were over. The world, which had marvelled at the discovery of grandiose Angkor in a desert forest, now was much more surprised at the gallantry of the Cambodian nation.

Leaving the renowned stone basreliefs, the Apsaras dancers now appeared on the stages of the present to enlist the admiration of the most fastidious spectators. The glorious feats of the past by the Khmer people so aptly engraved on the mossy Angkor temples were now revived and enhanced in this new historic episode.

THAYA SAROUN

AKI correspondent

from the "SOLIDARITY HOUSE" to BEN TRE VILLAGE"

(from "South Viet Nam in Struggle" 93rd issue)

FIDEL, the young leader of Cuba is ebullient and effusive, and an eloquent orator indeed. I like to hear him. Each of his phrases, each of his gestures speaks out his feelings. The leader of the uprising which overthrew the US puppet Batista regime, the hero of the first successful revolution in Latin America, the Commander-in-Chief of Cuba's armed forces, is very simple. He likes to dress as an armyman and, in fact, never wears anything else but his olive uniform and soft cotton cap, his boots and broad belt, and his revolver slung on his hip. Outwardly, the only difference between the High Commander and his rank-and-file soldiers lies perhaps iu his red-green, yellow-starred epaulet. His burning eyes, his energetic face framed by a beautiful beard and lush hair, all his features radiate revolutionary optimims.

Cuba's Prime Minister possesses a marked mass style. He never allows the rules of protocol or security cordons to interfere with his movement. More often than not he walks through police barricades, even over palisades to speak to students, meet the press, or talk at length with workers of a school building yard.

The Prime Minister stretched out his hands toward us over the shoulders of tall European journalists, saying:

"You're South Vietnamese, aren't you?

He shook hands with each of us and added:

"We'll meet separately and talk about a lot of things."

At dinner that day, the Indochinese journalists' delegations were received by the Prime Minister. When I requested him to autograph my water-lily-like shaped hat, he impishly put it on his head and asked me. "Do I look like a PLAF fighter?" Then, giving it back to me with his signature on it, he quipped: "I'm sure US bullets will not be able to go through that part of the hat bearing my name .Have it always on the front side."

It was a pity we had no opportunity for a formal interview with the Premier since all his time had been booked up by other foreign journalists.

One of them told me, "Now here have I see any head of government so compliant with the desires of the press corps."

THE journalists were also entertained by President Dorticos. He received the various delegations one after another in a large room with orchid hanging in the centre, all sorts of fragrant orchids. Said he when meeting the Vietnamese journalists, "We thank the Vietnamese people very much. They fight against US imperialism not only for their own independence and freedom, but also for world peace. We realize that we have not done enough for Viet Nam. That's why it is *not* up to you to thank us, — it is rather up to us to thank you."

Cuba's friendship towards Viet Nam finds its expression in her leaders' words and also in the deeds of every one of her citizens, old or young, at every street corner.

A second-form pupil was asked, "Who do you love most and why?" He promptly answered, "I love the Viet Nam fighters most because they are fighting the Yankees."

Nguyen Van Troi's portrait is the most popular Vietnamese picture in Cuba. In public places and squares, in private houses as well, one can see it.

At the Revolution Square, in front of Jose Marti's statue, are hung two huge paintings. The one on the right represents Che Guevara, the heroic guerilla admired by all Latin America and the revolutionary world at large. The other painting on the left shows Uncle Ho and Vietnamese men and women fighters charging the enemy.

I saw many other posters on Viet Nam, some with their colour already coming off, others quite newly painted. One of these pictures covered the whole wall of a multi-storeyed building, another was small enough to stand on a Minister's office table.

Many Cuban squares, schools and streets bear the name of Nguyen Van Troi. In my former visit to Caba, I had been given the privilege of attending a function in which one of Havana's biggest squares had its name changed into Nguyen Van Troi Square.

This time, I had the pleasure of visiting Ben Tre village which was located on the highway from Havana to Pinar del Rio, at a place marked by a large picture of a coconut-tree with the words "Ben Tre" on it. A path led from there to the village. At its bifurcation not far from the village, we saw a sculptural group of two girls: the one in front was a guerilla of South Viet Nam, wearing her conical hat and her checkered kerchief and holding a gun in her hands, the second was a Cuban maid tending a fat cow. The comrades in charge of Ben Tre village were coming up to that sculptural group to welcome us.

Ben Tre was a newly-formed cattle-rearing village. When its construction started Premier Fidel Castro came and encouraged the builders to speed up the work for the sake of socialism in Cuba and for Vietnam's fight as well.

Ben tre village counted 186 people, including 44 men, 43 women and 99 children. Their main job was to run 8 farms with 3,341 oxen and cows. 1,490 were milk-cows yielding on an average 10 litres per day each.

We visited some of the farms. They were built in concrete, each having its own architecture and all very artistic. In the farm specializing in rearing young cattle, we found some two month-old calf born of a Brownswin and Cebu crossbred stock and weighing already 230 kilos. The young cattle was to stay at that farm up to their 7th month, then they would be removed to another place not very far off. Their food ration would be reduced a little but they would be given to eat field grass partitioned in lots; they would also be given shelters where to take rest on hot summer days.

The Ben Tre cattle-breeders were issued 4 pairs of trousers and 6 coats each year, their monthly salary varied from 80 to 110 pesos. The village had its own food and sundry stores, its hairdressing-saloons where men and women could have their hair cut free of charge.

Each family was given a separate house with a drawing room, bed-room, dining-room, kitchen and lavatory. The size of the house varied with that of the family.

I went to Miguel Marquez's home. Her two elder daughters were watching the TV in the drawing-room. Hers was one of the largest families in the village. Apart from her and her husband, there were 4 sons and 4 daughters.

Little children in Ben Tre village all attended kindergartens. When they entered the first form they had to go to school outside the village in public buses. From one-month-old babies up to university students, the young generation was attentively cared for by the State which provided them with clothing, text-books and all other daily necessities.

We visited one of the kindergartens for 50 children from one month to 5 years of age. All the children were healthy and cute-looking. They were learning a song. Dinner was being prepared for them, with as menu: fried fish, vegetable soup and salad. Next to the refectory was a dispensary with a nurse in charge: once a week, the children were given a check-up by a doctor.

In that kindergarten amidst names like Marta, Lazaro, Raul... we found one Lien, which was a fine Vietnamese name. Its bearer was a 8-month-old girl, the first one born in Ben Tre village, and daughter of the lady manager of a farm.

Illuminada Serra, the Women's Union Secretary, told us, "We are doing everything to instil into the villagers the love for South Viet Nam, and the Ben Tre spirit as an incentive in labour and study. We are making every effort to help the Vietnamese Ben Tre people win their war over the US aggressors."

A few days before our visit, a rally of solidarity with Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos was held there. It was attended by the diplomatic corps and pressmen from the 7th Congress of the Journalists' International Organization.

In rich artistic forms — poetry recital, musical performance, song and dances — the people and pupils of Ben Tre village acquainted the audience with the content of the RSVN PRG's eight-point initiative at the Paris Conference. The spectators were especially attracted by a dance named "Concerted Uprising" performed by several hundred pupils. The stage was set on a village hill. One saw first, in a dim light, the scenes of a wretched life under US-puppet yoke. Outright oppression generated the people's struggle in Ben Tre, the cradle of the "Concerted Uprisings" which rapidly grew into a large movement combining political and military forms of action under the South Viet Nam NFL glorious banner. Thunderous applause greeted the NFL flag appearing on the hill peak in the midst of advancing PLAF units and masses of people. That red-and-blue banner brought about the light that dispelled for ever the darkness in which the Ben Tre people had to live.

BEN Tre village was the image of the future Ben Tre of South Viet Nam. That was the faith and the objective of the struggle of our and Cuba's Ben Tres. On behalf of our Ben Tre fellow-countrymen I expressed with deep emotion my feelings towards the people in that Ben Tre village and in presenting them with some souvenirs from the Cradle of the "Concerted Uprisings."

Illuminada Serra heartily shook my hands. "We are working day and night," she said, "for Cuba, for beloved Ben Tre, and with the hope that in a near future we shall have the privilege of visiting the heroic province of Ben Tre."

The Ben Tre villagers were planting many more coconut-trees to make the village look ever more like Ben Tre, they were labouring very hard to contribute to the victory of Ben Tre.

And my own fellow-countrymen in South Viet Nam's Ben Tre were also toiling for more successes, so as to translate soon into reality this dream of Cuba's Ben Tre: to welcome the Cuban-Ben Tre villagers to South Viet Nam.

I left Ben Tre but my heart remained behind. Everlasting friendship and indestructible solidarity — that is what binds Viet Nam and Cuba together!

HUYNH VAN LY

Executive member Association of Patriotic and Democratic Journalists of South Viet Nam

Like each family, **Miguel Marquez** *has her own home*